<u>CLAIMS</u>

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for programming a programmable hearing aid with a configurable hearing aid

programmer under the control of a computer, the method comprising:

        starting the computer;

        executing hearing aid fitting software on the computer;

        obtaining hearing aid fitting parameters at the computer;

        displaying the opportunity to download a firmware program to the hearing aid

programmer;

        downloading a firmware program to the hearing aid programmer in response to an

affirmative response to said displaying;

        downloading hearing aid parameters to the hearing aid programmer; and

        programming the hearing aid with the hearing aid programmer.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

        verifying that a connection between the hearing aid programmer and the hearing aid

                exists prior to said programming.

3.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

        coupling the computer to the hearing aid programmer prior to said displaying.

4.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

coupling the hearing aid to the hearing aid programmer prior to said downloading hearing

aid parameters.

5.   The method of claim 3, further comprising:

coupling the hearing aid to the hearing aid programmer prior to the said downloading

hearing aid parameters.

6.   A hearing aid programming system, comprising:

a computer under the control of hearing aid fitting software;

a hearing aid programmer coupled to the computer and responsive to a firmware

program, the firmware program downloadable to the hearing aid programmer only in response to

a user input at the computer;

a programmable hearing aid coupled to the hearing aid programmer, the hearing aid

programmable with parameters transmitted from the computer to the hearing aid programmer

and programmed into nonvolatile memory of the programmable hearing aid by the hearing aid

programmer.

7.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 6, further comprising:

a parameter memory associated with the hearing aid programmer for receiving and

storing the parameters.

8.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 7, further comprising:

a firmware memory associated with the hearing aid programmer for receiving and storing

the firmware program.

9.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 8, further comprising:

a computer interface for providing an electrical and data communications interface

between the computer and the hearing aid programmer.

10.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 9, further comprising:

a hearing aid interface for providing an electrical and data communications interface

between the hearing aid programmer and the hearing aid.

11.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 10, wherein:

the computer interface complies with the Universal Serial Bus 1.0, 1.1 and 2.0 standard

protocol.

12.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 11, wherein:

the computer interface complies with the Universal Serial Bus 1.0, 1.1 and 2.0 standard

protocol.

13.   The hearing aid programming system of claim 12, wherein:

the computer interface complies with the Universal Serial Bus 1.0, 1.1 and 2.0 standard

protocol.

14.   Apparatus for programming a hearing aid, comprising:

computer means for executing hearing aid fitting software and capturing patient-specific parameters;

hearing aid programmer means responsive to said computer means and to a firmware program for receiving parameters from said computer means and programming the parameters into the hearing aid; and

user interface means for obtaining a command from a user prior to downloading the firmware program from said computer means to said hearing aid programmer means.

15.   A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for programming a programmable hearing aid with a configurable hearing aid programmer comprising:

starting the computer;

executing hearing aid fitting software on the computer;

obtaining hearing aid fitting parameters at the computer;

displaying the opportunity to download a firmware program to the hearing aid programmer;

downloading the firmware program to the hearing aid programmer in response to an affirmative response to said displaying;

downloading hearing aid parameters to the hearing aid programmer; and

programming the hearing aid with the hearing aid programmer.